

## Seeing God's Hand in Hardship, Part 5 - Acts 28:7-10 – October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- This is part five of a series titled; "Seeing God's Hand in Hardship."
- Here in this passage, we see the Apostle Paul experiencing unspeakable difficulty, yet, God's hand is in everything he goes through.
- There are several ways to see, that in spite of his perilous circumstances, God is faithful to show Paul that He will never leave him.
- The common denominator in all that happens to Paul is that God's hand of blessing can be seen side by side along with the adversity.

**Ecclesiastes 7:14** In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider that God has made the one side by side with the other, so that man may not find out anything that shall be after him. AMP

- Perhaps this is one reason that the Holy Spirit had Luke record the details of what took place when they were shipwrecked on Malta.

"The shipwreck of the vessel had not shipwrecked the cause of the gospel; on the other hand it had given to Malta a noble opportunity of hearing the gospel."

Charles Spurgeon

- In other words, the hand of God's blessing came along side the adversity of the shipwreck for the furthering of the Gospel of Christ.
- This is how it is for us as well. Much of the adversity we experience will usually have, along side of it, the blessing hand of God in it.

- God's hand isn't always easily recognizable at first which is what happened when they were shipwrecked on the Island of Malta.
- We saw the first one in verse one, where, after swimming to shore and clinging to life in the midst of this storm, they finally reach land.

### 1. Refuge (Verse 1)

- Here, we saw that God's hand came by way of refuge as they land on the island of Malta, (Refuge), which they didn't recognize at first.
- There are those times when God moves His mighty hand on our behalf, bringing us to our Malta in order to provide us a place of refuge.

### 2. Kindness (Verse 2)

- The second way that we can see God's hand in our hardship was in verse two. It's when we're the recipients of "unusual kindness."
- Were told that it's cold and raining, so the Barbarians show unusual kindness by building a fire for them, and are welcoming to them.

### 3. Strength (Verse 3a)

- The third way that we can discover God's hand in our hardship was found in the first part of verse three; it's His supernatural strength.
- Even though Paul is as tired and exhausted as everyone else, he has the strength to gather a pile of brushwood and put it on the fire.

### 4. Opportunity (Verse 3b)

- That brought us to the fourth way we discover God's hand in our hardship. It comes in the form of a divinely appointed opportunity.
- The opportunity is presented vis-à-vis a snake that's driven out from the heat of the fire then fastens itself on the Apostle Paul's hand.

### 5. Tragedy (Verse 4)

- In verse four we looked at the fifth way God's hand may be seen in our hardship and how it can come when a tragedy strikes us.
- After the locals see the snake striking Paul, they say the goddess Justice hasn't let him escape because he must be a murderer.

### 6. Influence (Verses 5-6)

- The sixth way we saw the hand of God in our hardship is in the influence we can have on others when they see how tragedy affects us.
- When Paul shakes the snake off his hand and didn't suffer any ill effects from the venom the local's then change their minds about him.

### 7. Hospitality (Verse 7)

7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably.

- This brings us to our seventh way of seeing God's hand in hardship. Sometimes it comes when someone shows us their hospitality.
- v7 We're told that a chief official on the island named Publius welcomed them into his home and showed them hospitality for three days.
- Think about how much that must have blessed them. They go from ship to sand, and now someone is opening up their home to them.

- What makes this so interesting is that not only were there a total of 267 of them, but most of them are actually convicted felons.
- As we'll see next in verses 8-9, this amazing hospitality on the part of Publius will in no way go unrewarded by the hand of God Himself.
- I suppose it goes without saying, but there are those times, when at the perfect time, God's hand can be seen when shown hospitality.

**3 John 8** We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. NIV

**1 Peter 4:9-10** 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. NIV

**Romans 12:9-13** 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. NIV

### 8. Health (Verses 8-9)

8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.

- The eighth way one may see God's hand in hardship comes in the form good health or a healing and cure for some illness or disease.
- v8 Luke tells us that Paul prayed for and laid hands on Publius' father who was healed from his fever and the sickness of dysentery.
- v9 We're told that news of this spread rapidly throughout the island, and all the others who were also sick came and were also cured.

- This word for healed in the original language of the Greek New Testament is not the same as the one used for a miraculous healing.
- Actually, the word means "to receive medical attention," which would seem to indicate that Luke, as Paul's physician, was involved.
- One thought is that this dysentery was from the infected goat milk there on Malta and is a condition today known as "Malta Fever."

"The news of this act of healing spread rapidly; in consequence, everyone in Malta who was suffering from any physical ailment came to receive suitable treatment; no doubt Luke was able to add his medical skill to Paul's gift of healing."

F.F. Bruce

- Be that as it may, there's something else here as it relates to God's hand of healing in hardship and suffering that I would like to look at.
- When Paul prays their cured yet when he prays for himself he's not cured of his thorn in the flesh which was likely a disease in his eyes.
- Why? Because people are more prone to see God's hand in their lives when they see us struggling with the same things in our lives.

- In a sense, we earn the right to speak into the lives of others when we ourselves are going through similar struggles in our lives.
- Conversely, people are less prone to let us speak into their lives about their struggles, if what they're experiencing is foreign to us.
- For myself personally, I'm not as ready to receive from someone who has no idea what it's like to go through what I'm going through.

### 9. Appreciation (Verses 10a)

10a They honored us in many ways...

- The ninth way that we can see God's hand in our hardship, is when someone honors us, and shows us their appreciation of us.
- v10a After Paul, and Luke with him, are able to cure them of their fevers, they show their appreciation by honoring them in many ways.
- The Maltese people had an attitude of gratitude. As one commentator eloquently wrote; "the attitude of the islanders was boundless."

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** 12 Now also we beseech you, brethren, get to know those who labor among you [recognize them for what they are, acknowledge and appreciate and respect them all]--your leaders who are over you in the Lord and those who warn and kindly reprove and exhort you. 13 And hold them in very high and most affectionate esteem in [intelligent and sympathetic] appreciation of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. AMP

### 10. Provision (Verse 10b)

10b ...and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

- The tenth way we can recognize the hand of God in our hardship is when He provides all we need, in order to do all He has for us to do.
- v10b Luke tells us that when they were ready to set sail for Rome, the islanders furnished them with all the supplies that they needed.
- This reminds me of that hymn of old which says; "whatever my need, His hand hath provided." God will always provide our need.
- Here, God's hand can be seen in that He chooses and uses the Maltese people to supply the provisions for Paul and his friends.

"When at last the time came for the party to leave Malta, the Maltese showed their appreciation of Paul and his friends by putting on board for them the things that would supply their need and minister to their comfort for the remainder of the voyage."

F.F. Bruce

- There's one last thing here that I would like to point out before we close our time in God's Word today. It has to do with Paul and Malta.
- This may have been the only time that Paul leaves a place in such a way that he is shown appreciation and given plenty of provision.

One commentator noted this well when they wrote; "This whole period on the island must have been one of great joy for Paul. The island had indeed been a 'refuge.' Very rarely in his years of gospel pioneering had he been so greatly appreciated and sent on his way with his praise on everyone's lips."